EAST WARM SPRINGS ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN/AGREEMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OR-025-04-067

Three Rivers Resource Area
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Date of Preparation
January 31, 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The East Warm Springs Allotment #7001 is located approximately 35 miles south of Burns, Oregon (Map 1). The allotment is currently divided into several smaller seeded and native vegetation pastures which are grazed on a rotation basis between April 11 and June 15 and one very large Native Pasture which is used from June 16 to August 31 annually. The spring use pastures are of relatively equal size even though the amount of livestock in each pasture varies. The distribution of available Animal Unit Months (AUMs) of forage in each pasture also varies considerably which makes it difficult to develop a yearlong grazing system for the allotment which meets both the permittee's needs for forage and the resource objectives for the allotment.

The large Native Pasture is also a portion of the Warm Springs Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA). This pasture supports 35 to 100 wild horses depending on when the latest horse gathering was conducted. When gathers are not conducted in a timely manner, wild horse numbers may go over 100 animals for one or more years. The wild horses that are located within the allotment have distinctive markings and are very adoptable to the public.

In 2004, monitoring data collected on the East Warm Springs Allotment over the past 10 years were analyzed through a formal interdisciplinary allotment evaluation process. The evaluation analyzed whether or not management actions in place were causing resource objectives to be met. The evaluation also included an analysis of the allotment to determine if current management was in conformance with the Oregon and Washington Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

The results of the evaluation describe how upland watershed function; riparian and wetland areas watershed function; ecological processes; water quality; and native, Threatened and Endangered (T&E), and locally important species standards are being achieved or are not present in the allotment. All standards present were achieved across the allotment. Even though the allotment, as a whole, is meeting the standards, it is a concern that the seeding pastures that have not received scheduled periodic rest over the evaluation period are not meeting forage demand.

A. Need

The need for proposed management changes and projects addressed in this Environmental Assessment (EA) is driven by the need to improve livestock management within the East Warm Springs Allotment. By changing current management on a portion of the Native Pasture, scheduled use on several seeding pastures can be reduced which would allow for improved vigor and production of forage plant species. Development of fences and reliable water would make the change in management possible. The proposed water well, which would supply water to the Native and Weed Lake Pastures, would also provide a much needed water source for wild horses during drought periods.

As the situation stands now, it is not possible to continue to make further progress toward current allotment objectives. Shortfalls in spring forage for livestock, riparian conditions along lower Jack Creek, and periods of prolonged drought in the allotment have highlighted the need to address the current situation.

B. Purpose

The purpose of the proposed activity is to adjust the grazing use in the East Warm Springs Allotment to meet the land use plan objectives of the Three Rivers Resource Management Plan (RMP) found in Appendix 9, Pages 116-117, and the objectives developed in the 2004 East Warm Springs Allotment evaluation. The objectives developed in the allotment evaluation process are:

1. "Manage for a stable to upward trend in range condition to provide habitat and forage for big game, wild horses, and livestock in the following amounts of forage over the next 6 years:"

Livestock	7,601 AUMs
Mule Deer	80 AUMs
Antelope	99 AUMs
Wild Horses	1,200 AUMs

2. "Maintain the availability of upland forbs for sage-grouse from May to mid-July each year in the Native Pasture during the next evaluation period."

3. "Maintain the existing playas (fenced and unfenced) found within the East Warm Springs Allotment in their present or better condition over the next 10 years."

Development of an additional spring use pasture with a reliable water source would better match forage supply with forage demand through the entire grazing season within the allotment. Management would be improved in the Northwest, Northeast, and Southwest Eagles Nest Seeding Pastures as well as the newly-created Weed Lake Pasture.

Development of an exclosure fence around approximately 1-mile of Jack Creek would improve riparian conditions and habitat for wildlife in the area. This fence would move effects associated with livestock and wild horses away from the creek making possible the improvement in riparian and meadow habitats.

C. Goals and Objectives of the Proposed Activity

The goal of the proposed activity is to improve riparian habitat along 1-mile of Jack Creek public land. An additional goal is to match livestock forage demands with available forage within the East Warm Springs Allotment spring use pastures. These goals would be accomplished through development of an additional spring use pasture which would be rested every other year. It would also provide for offsite water away from Jack Creek which allows for the development of an exclosure fence to protect the riparian resources along the creek.

D. Compliance with Land Use Plans, Laws, Regulations, and Policy

This project is in conformance with objectives and land use allocations in the 1992 Three Rivers RMP and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and with the objectives stated in the August 12, 1997 Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the States of Oregon and Washington. This project is also consistent with the Endangered Species Act Sections 2(c) and 7(a)1. The proposed project also conforms to all State, local, and Tribal laws, regulations, and land use plans.

CHAPTER II: DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action - Project Development and Management Changes

The proposed action is to construct the Weed Lake Pasture fence which would create an additional spring use pasture and the Lower Jack Creek exclosure fence which would enclose the riparian area along approximately 1-mile of Jack Creek. In conjunction with these fences, a well and pipeline would be constructed to replace water for livestock and wild horses which would be fenced into the new Lower Jack Creek exclosure. All project construction activities would occur within T. 28 S., R. 29¾ E., and T.28 S., R. 30 E., Willamette Meridian. Refer to Map 2 for a map of the proposed action alternative.

All new fences described as part of the proposed action would be built to BLM standard specifications for either a 3- or 4-wire steel fence. The Weed Lake Pasture fence would be a 3-wire fence and the Lower Jack Creek exclosure fence would be a 4-wire fence. The top two or three strands would be barbed wire and the bottom strand smooth wire. Rock cribs would be constructed at corners, on each side of any gates and to create stretch panels and end braces.

Fence construction on public land would be by hand and would require only a minimum disturbance of soil and vegetation. Steel posts would be solid green or grey and pounded into the ground, each typically creating a hole 12 inches in depth and 1½ inches across. All Terrain Vehicle or 4-wheel drive vehicle use during fence construction would be restricted to that required to distribute materials and construct the fence. No vegetation would be cleared or soil otherwise disturbed.

The well would be 8 inches in diameter and approximately 200 feet in depth. The well would be cased with steel pipe to protect against cave in. Once the well is drilled and cased, power would be run to the well site from the nearest source and a power pole would be placed at the well by the local power company. After the well is developed, a 2-inch pipeline would be laid underground to supply water to three trough locations along the pipeline. Troughs would be 30-foot bottomless troughs with bird boards or escape ramps installed to protect birds and small mammals that may access the trough from drowning. A small overflow dugout would be constructed at each trough to facilitate draining the pipeline to protect against freezing when it is not in use.

Special Status plant species surveys have been or will be completed on all proposed project sites prior to any construction. No plant species have been found which would alter any of the proposed projects or management changes.

Appropriate archaeological surveys have been conducted as deemed necessary by the District archaeologist. Project designs have been altered, where necessary, to ensure that archaeological resources are not affected by any of the proposed projects or management changes.

Once all proposed projects are completed, a management plan would be implemented which provides for rest periods in all spring use pastures. The proposed grazing system would also implement a deferred grazing system on the Native Pasture which provides for resource concerns on the remainder of the allotment. The proposed grazing system is as follows:

Even Years

PASTURE	MAXIMUM LIVESTOCK NUMBERS	USE PERIOD	AUMS
Northeast Eagles Nest	180	04/20 – 05/31	249
Northwest Eagles Nest	0	Rest	0
Middle East Eagles Nest	260	04/11 – 05/31	437
Middle West Eagles Nest	0	Rest	0
Southeast Eagles Nest	354	04/11 – 05/31	595
Southwest Eagles Nest	420	04/20 – 05/10	290
Jack Creek	0	Rest	0
Weed Lake	420	05/11 – 05/31	290
Saddle Butte Highway	0	Rest	0

PASTURE	MAXIMUM LIVESTOCK NUMBERS	USE PERIOD	AUMS
Saddle Butte Basin	0	Rest	0
Spite Field	0	Rest	0
Plateau	202	04/11 – 05/31	340
Native	1,785	06/01 – 08/31	5,400
		TOTAL	7,601

Odd Years

PASTURE	MAXIMUM LIVESTOCK NUMBERS	USE PERIOD	AUMS
Northeast Eagles Nest	0	Rest	0
Northwest Eagles Nest	330	04/20 – 05/31	456
Middle East Eagles Nest	0	Rest	0
Middle West Eagles Nest	260	04/11 – 05/31	437
Southeast Eagles Nest	0	Rest	0
Southwest Eagles Nest	0	Rest	0
Jack Creek	270	04/20 – 05/31	373
Weed Lake	0	Rest	0
Saddle Butte Highway	177	04/11 – 05/31	297
Saddle Butte Basin	178	04/11 – 05/31	298
Spite Field	202	04/11 – 05/31	340
Plateau	0	Rest	0
Native	1,785	06/01 – 08/31	5,400
		TOTAL	7,601

In order to get to the above livestock numbers for the allotment, we would allocate additional forage to William R. Taylor and V.E. Ranches, Inc., which is currently available. William R. Taylor and V.E. Ranches, Inc., have applied for this additional grazing preference to be allocated to them after securing additional base property. This allocation would bring William R. Taylor's grazing permit to the level that it was at prior to being reduced because of the sale of base property in 2002 to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). It would also increase the grazing permit of V.E. Ranches, Inc., to 2,391 AUMs. The grazing permit for V.E. Ranches, Inc., was for 3,022 AUMs prior to being reduced because of the sale of base property in 2002 to USFWS. Forage we are proposing to reallocate has been determined to be available on a sustainable basis through the East Warm Springs Allotment evaluation which was completed in August of 2004.

The current grazing preferences for William R. Taylor and V.E. Ranches, Inc., are as follows:

William R. Taylor:

Livestock Number and Kind	Begin Date	Ending Date	AUMs
123 Cattle	04/11	08/31	579

V.E. Ranches, Inc.:

Livestock Number and Kind	Begin Date	Ending Date	AUMs
260 Cattle	04/11	08/31	1,220

The proposed grazing preferences for William R. Taylor and V.E. Ranches, Inc., are as follows:

William R. Taylor:

Livestock Number and Kind	Begin Date	Ending Date	AUMs
239 Cattle	04/20	08/31	1,053

V.E. Ranches, Inc.:

Livestock Number and Kind	Begin Date	Ending Date	AUMs
361 Cattle	04/20	05/31	498
626 Cattle	06/01	08/31	1,893
			2,391

After monitoring the utilization levels, actual use levels, and the trend in rangeland conditions for three cycles of the grazing system (6 years) in the East Warm Springs Allotment, the grazing preference for V.E. Ranches, Inc., may be reallocated to the pre-decision level if it is determined that additional forage is permanently available for livestock.

B. No Action Alternative

Livestock management would continue in accordance with the 1993 East Warm Springs Allotment Management Plan (AMP). Maximum flexibility within the AMP would continue to be necessary to allow for allotment objectives to be met. There would be some risk of not meeting the standards for rangeland health in several of the early use pastures if the AMP is strictly followed. There would be no construction of the Weed Lake Pasture fence, Lower Jack Creek exclosure fence, or the Weed Lake well and pipeline projects (Map 3). Also, no grazing management changes to help match forage demand with forage availability are proposed under this alternative. The riparian area along Jack Creek would not be excluded from access by livestock and wild horses and would continue to be affected by yearlong use.

The current allotment evaluation identified forage which is available on a sustainable basis in the Native, Northeast Eagles Nest, Northwest Eagles Nest, Southwest Eagles Nest, and Jack Creek Pastures which is not currently allocated with current permitted use. This available forage is proposed to be reallocated to William R. Taylor and V.E. Ranches, Inc., as identified under the proposed action.

Any additional forage determined to be available on a sustainable basis by rangeland monitoring studies following 6 years of monitoring would be reallocated to V.E. Ranches, Inc., until their active permitted use is restored to the level preceding the 2002 base property decision which reduced their permitted use to the present level.

C. Other Alternatives Considered

A no grazing alternative was considered but, since the Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Management and other terms and conditions on the allotment are currently being met, will not be analyzed further in this document.

CHAPTER III: AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Critical Elements

The following critical elements of the human environment have been analyzed in the Three Rivers RMP/EIS, are not known to be present, or would not be known to be affected by the proposed action or alternatives and will not be discussed further in this EA: Air Quality, Environmental Justice**,** Prime or Unique Farmlands, Floodplains, Hazardous Materials, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, American Indian Religious Concerns, Paleontology, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Visual Resources, Wilderness Study Areas or Wilderness Areas.

Resources analyzed are as follows:

1. Healthy Rangelands Resources

The following resource descriptions relate to the standards for rangeland health identified in the document "Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the States of Oregon and Washington" (August 12, 1997).

Watershed Function - Uplands (Standard 1): “Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates, moisture storage, and stability that are appropriate to soil, climate, and landform.”

Upland soils provide a medium for healthy plant communities across the East Warm Springs Allotment. Moisture is captured during spring snowmelt and infrequent storms throughout the year. Good plant cover and litter provide protection to soils while also supplying organic matter which is incorporated into the soil. Very little erosion has been observed within the allotment.

Vegetation throughout the East Warm Springs Allotment is dominated by low sagebrush and Wyoming big sagebrush plant communities. There are some salt desert shrub plant communities at the lowest elevations in the allotment. Associated species found in the allotment are green and gray rabbitbrush, Sandberg's bluegrass, Idaho fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass, Thurber's needlegrass, lupines, and various forbs. Several pastures on the northern side of the allotment have been seeded to crested wheatgrass to provide for early season forage which allows for the deferment of native plant communities.

Fences are constructed to control the timing, duration, and frequency of grazing and to provide for periodic rest to achieve improvements in rangeland condition in the area.

Watershed Function - Riparian/Wetland Areas (Standard 2): "Riparian-wetland areas are in properly functioning physical condition appropriate to soil, climate, and landform."

There are no perennial streams found within the East Warm Springs Allotment. Jack Creek, which makes up the major drainage area in the allotment, flows water during spring runoff and during intense storms which occur over the area.

No proper functioning studies have been conducted on any streams within the allotment.

Ecological Processes (Standard 3): "Healthy, productive, and diverse plant and animal populations and communities appropriate to soil, climate, and landform are supported by ecological processes of nutrient cycling, energy flow, and the hydrologic cycle."

There is diverse plant composition and community structure which is expected for mid to late ecological status ecological sites found throughout the East Warm Springs Allotment. Plant litter is being incorporated back into the soil and plant roots are occupying the soil profile across the allotment. In addition, the appropriate native species diversity is present within the allotment. Based on these criteria, the allotment is an area where progress is being made toward achieving adequate ecological processes that are appropriate to the soil, climate, and landform of the area.

Water Quality (Standard 4): "Surface water and groundwater quality, influenced by agency actions, complies with State water quality standards."

As with many areas within the Great Basin, natural water sources are present for only a short period of the year, typically in the spring. There are only a few natural water sources which last through the summer found within the allotment which are associated with potholes in drainages. Over the years, waterholes and reservoirs have been constructed to provide for water throughout the allotment. Agency actions are not known to impact water quality within the allotment.

Native, T&E, and Locally Important Species (Standard 5): "Habitats support healthy, productive, and diverse populations and communities of native plants and animals (including Special Status species and species of local importance) appropriate to soil, climate, and landform."

Long-billed curlew, snowy plover, and greater sage-grouse and their habitat are present within the East Warm Springs Allotment. Pygmy rabbits are also known to be present within the allotment.

Migratory northern bald eagles (Federal Threatened) pass over the area annually. Golden eagles and ferruginous hawks are known to nest within the allotment. Red-tailed hawks, Swainson's hawk, American kestrels, and other raptors are common to the area and may nest in some areas within the allotment.

Additional native or locally important species include big game species and upland game birds. Mule deer and pronghorn antelope spend their summers and winters in the allotment. Upland game birds in the area include mourning dove during spring and summer, and chukar yearlong. Uplands provide habitat for a wide variety of native species found in the area.

At this time, there are five Special Status plants known to exist in the East Warm Springs Allotment. Desert combleaf, *Polyctenium fremontii* var. *confertum;* fourwing milkvetch, *Astragalus tetrapterus;* Malheur wirelettuce, *Stephanomeria malheurensis;* Raven's biscuitroot, *Lomatium ravenii;* and smooth desert dandelion, *Malacothrix glabrata*.

Native plant community composition, age class distribution, and productivity are appropriate for site potential across the allotment. Plant communities provide for habitat connectivity across a majority of the allotment.

2. Domestic Livestock Management

Grazing management for the allotment provides for spring use in several small pastures, most of which have been planted to crested wheatgrass. These pastures are used from April 11 to June 1 every other year to defer the native rangelands during the critical part of the native plants growing season. On years that the seeding pastures are not used they are rested yearlong. The largest pasture in the allotment (the Native Pasture) is deferred until after June 1 each year and then livestock enter the pasture at different locations to minimize the effects of grazing grasses each year during the late part of the growing season. Livestock remain in the Native Pasture until August 31 when they are gathered and taken to private property.

The current grazing permits provide for up to 5,950 AUMs of forage for livestock, licensed at 100 percent public land. There are 7,601 AUMs of forage available for grazing in the allotment. The active permitted use for the allotment is commonly not reached by the current permittees.

3. Wild Horses

The East Warm Springs Allotment is a portion of the Warm Springs Wild Horse HMA. Horse numbers vary from 35 to 100 animals within the allotment depending on when the last gather was conducted. Horse numbers may go over 100 animals if gathers are not regularly conducted on the allotment. On September 7, 2004, a horse census flight was conducted to determine how many animals were in the allotment. During the census there were 128 horses observed (96 adults and 32 foals). The next gather is scheduled for no sooner than 2006 and is dependent on funding. The wild horses present on the allotment are very adoptable with fairly good conformation and coloring.

4. Cultural Resources

Over 8,400 acres of cultural resources surveys have occurred within the East Warm Springs Allotment. Cultural surveys have been completed for all proposed fencing and the Weed Lake well. A cultural survey will be completed on the Weed Lake pipeline prior to any construction.

No known paleontological resources occur within the proposed project activity area. No American Indian religious sites or use areas are known to occur within the proposed activity area.

5. Recreation

Hunting is the most common form of recreation that occurs within the project area. Primitive camping opportunities are also present in the allotment.

6. Noxious Weeds

Four different noxious weed species have been documented within the allotment. Noxious weed populations occupy approximately 71 acres at 25 known sites. Most of the known sites occur along roads and have been treated either manually or with herbicides.

7. Migratory Birds

Migratory birds, such as northern pintail, mallard, mourning dove, American avocet, sage sparrow, Brewer's sparrow, white crowned sparrow, and the Western meadowlark are known to use the project area for nesting, foraging, and resting as they pass through on their yearly migrations.

8. Socioeconomics

There are currently six permittees that have active grazing permits within the East Warm Springs Allotment. The active grazing preference for the six permittees is 5,972 AUMs of forage, while the potential for the allotment is 7,601 AUMs of forage. Implementation of the East Warm Springs AMP and associated projects will improve the economies of the affected ranches and the local economy.

CHAPTER IV: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Proposed Action

1. Healthy Rangeland Resources

Watershed Function - Uplands (Standard 1):

Under the proposed action, some upland vegetation, currently included in the Native Pasture which is currently used annually from June 1 to August 31, would be realigned into the proposed Weed Lake Pasture. Consequently, this area would be subject to an earlier and shorter season-of-use (April 11 to May 31). Because the Weed Lake Pasture would be grazed during the critical growth period for grasses, it would be given total rest from grazing every other year.

Improvement in upland condition within the proposed Weed Lake Pasture would occur under the proposed action. The amount and distribution of plant cover would increase, litter would be able to increase which would increase organic matter, bare ground would decrease, and plant composition would improve in the proposed Weed Lake Pasture.

The Native Pasture would not experience any changes other than the reduction in the size of the pasture.

Watershed Function - Riparian/Wetland Areas (Standard 2):

The proposed fence exclosure along Jack Creek would remove livestock and wild horse use from the public portion of the creek. No use within the exclosure would be authorized. Removal of livestock would allow for improvement in the riparian plant composition, community structure, and streambank stability along the creek.

Ecological Processes (Standard 3):

The majority of the allotment is in a mid to late seral stage of development with good species diversity and community structure. The proposed Weed Lake Pasture, Northwest Eagles Nest Pasture, Northeast Eagles Nest Pasture, and Southwest Eagles Nest Pasture would experience improvement in community structure under every other year rest. The plant communities in the Lower Jack Creek exclosure would improve in plant composition, species diversity, and community structure as well as an improvement in litter accumulation. Soils would increase in organic matter as litter accumulates and is incorporated into the soil. Biological activity would also increase within the exclosure as the plant communities become more productive.

Ecological processes would remain unchanged in the remainder of the allotment. Trend in the Native Pasture, which has been determined to be static through the 2004 East Warm Springs Allotment evaluation, would be expected to remain static or improve under the proposed action alternative.

Water Quality (Standard 4):

With the exclusion of livestock, improved riparian vegetation condition and bank stability within the Lower Jack Creek exclosure are expected. These conditions would, in turn, allow improvement in water quality along the excluded portion of Jack Creek.

Native, T&E, and Locally Important Species (Standard 5):

Wildlife:

No effects on northern bald eagles or other raptor species would be expected under this alternative.

Livestock forage utilization levels of no more than 45 percent of current years growth in the Native Pasture would leave adequate herbaceous cover on uplands for greater sage-grouse and pygmy rabbits. Under the 45 percent utilization level, large areas of the Native Pasture would receive less than 30 percent utilization. The proposed new fencing, which is located outside of known greater sage-grouse habitat, would have no known impact to greater sage-grouse.
The livestock exclusion resulting from the construction of the Lower Jack Creek exclosure would allow for improved riparian habitat along 1-mile of publicly-owned stream. The removal of livestock grazing would provide for

increases in desirable rushes, sedges, and possibly riparian woody species. The increased cover within the exclosure would benefit many small mammals and birds.

The new fence may be a slight collision hazard to mule deer. The fence would have visible ribbon tied onto the fence after construction to help make it more visible. Wire spacing of the two top wires would be no less than 12 inches to ensure deer do not get hung up in the wires. The bottom wire of the new fence would be smooth wire and be 18 inches above the ground surface. The fence would have little effect on antelope, because they would pass under the fence.

For other species of wildlife, riparian improvement within the Lower Jack Creek exclosure would result in increased wildlife use and species richness. Many songbirds and small mammals would be favored by increased ground cover within the excluded area.

The effect on wildlife habitat would be the continued improvements to the upland and riparian vegetative communities and associated habitats from changes in livestock grazing management. These changes would result in improvements to the wildlife habitat of the project area.

Plants:

Native plant communities would benefit from the creation of the Weed Lake Pasture and Lower Jack Creek exclosure. Rest periods every other year in the Weed Lake Pasture would allow for improved vigor and diversity of native plants. Exclusion of vegetation in the Lower Jack Creek exclosure would improve community composition, age class distribution, and productivity of plant communities within the exclosure.

2. Domestic Livestock Management

Effects of the proposed action would be centered on improved livestock management. By fencing the riparian area along Jack Creek into an exclosure and providing offsite water from a controlled well source, livestock would be less inclined to move to the lower elevation areas of the allotment which would improve distribution and utilization patterns in the Native Pasture. Development of the Weed Lake Pasture would improve the distribution of forage between the spring use and summer use areas in the allotment.

3. Wild Horses

Fencing the Weed Lake Pasture would decrease the area that is currently available to wild horses in the East Warm Springs Allotment. Horses currently use a small

portion of the area in the winter when snow periodically covers the higher elevation country. Past horse sightings indicate that only a few horses would be affected by the removal of this portion of their range. Sufficient wintering areas exist for the horses to use without causing resource damage.

Removing the proposed Weed Lake Pasture from the Warm Springs Wild Horse HMA will be evaluated in the next land use planning process. Following construction of the proposed Weed Lake fence, gates will be closed to help improve vegetation conditions within the pasture.

The Lower Jack Creek exclosure would fence an unreliable water source that has been available to the wild horses in the past. If needed, this water can be replaced with water from the proposed Weed Lake well during periods of drought and in the winter months when livestock are not in the allotment.

4. Cultural Resources

It is expected that fencing, as proposed, would result in no effects to archaeological resources within the proposed project activity area. With the exception of the Weed Lake pipeline, all proposed project development sites have received appropriate archaeological surveys. A cultural survey of the proposed Weed Lake pipeline will be completed prior to any construction occurring. If, during completion of the archaeological survey or during the time of actual construction, any highly significant archaeological sites are found, the proposed project would be rerouted or relocated to mitigate construction and post-construction impacts. Results of the archaeological surveys would be located in Burns BLM files, with a copy forwarded to the State Historic Preservation Office for their information.

Positive effects would be the addition to the information base and protection of additional cultural sites, if found. No negative effects would be expected.

5. Recreation

There would be no impacts under the proposed action alternative to either hunting or primitive camping activities that occur within the East Warm Springs Allotment.

6. Noxious Weeds

Any soil-disturbing activity has the potential to create an environment for the introduction or establishment of noxious weeds. Any equipment used on the project sites would be inspected and cleaned of any weed seeds prior to being allowed to enter the project site. Periodic inspections and observations at the project sites would be made following construction to monitor and ensure that new noxious weeds do not become established. If noxious weeds are found they would be treated using the most appropriate methods available.

7. Migratory Birds

The effects to migratory birds would be minimal. Habitat within the Lower Jack Creek exclosure would improve over time allowing for more opportunities for migratory birds to forage, nest, and rest within the excluded area. Improvement in management, by ensuring rest from livestock use, of the seeding pastures would increase migratory bird use.

8. Socioeconomic Effects

Projects proposed under this alternative would have a short-term positive economic effect to the local economy resulting from the income generated from construction contracts. The permittees which would use the Northeast Eagles Nest, Northwest Eagles Nest, Jack Creek, and the proposed Weed Lake Pastures would have more stable livestock operations under this alternative. Over the long term, the improvement of the allotment would enable the permittees to have an increasing income as rangeland conditions improve.

9. Cumulative Effects

Under the proposed action alternative, there would be 7 to 8 miles of new fencing, one new well, and a new pipeline with associated storage tank and water troughs added to the East Warm Springs Allotment. These projects would have a positive effect on vegetation resources found within the project area by making it possible to rest some areas every other year or exclude them from livestock grazing. Other than the effect of allowing for periodic rest or exclusion, the additional miles of fence that are proposed would have a minimal effect on the area as a whole. Fences would blend into the environment unless the observer was close to the project. Overall there would be a positive effect to the ecological condition of the area.

B. No Action Alternative

1. Healthy Rangeland Resources

Watershed Function - Upland (Standard 1):

Effects on uplands would be unchanged under this alternative. The Native Pasture would remain the same size as it is now. Livestock that currently move to the lower elevations near Weed Lake in late summer would continue to do so causing the uplands in this area to be heavily used each year. Although the standard is currently being met, there is some risk that it would not continue to be met if the current high utilization levels in this area are not addressed.

Watershed Function - Riparian/Wetland Areas (Standard 2):

Concentrated livestock impacts to public riparian resources on the lower portion of Jack Creek would be expected to continue under this alternative. Each late summer and fall livestock move down from the higher elevation ranges in anticipation of the move to their home pastures located on private land. Once they reach the lower elevation country, livestock tend to concentrate their use along the Jack Creek drainage because of naturally occurring potholes of water found there. These potholes are the only source of water found at the lower elevations on the north end of the allotment. The overall effect of this extreme use would continue to be negative toward riparian objectives in the impacted area.

Ecological Processes (Standard 3):

Potential recovery of the ecological processes would continue to be slow on uplands within the allotment. The ecological processes along Jack Creek would not improve without exclusion from livestock. Other ecological processes have been improving from past management and would continue to improve at the same rate under this alternative.

Water Quality (Standard 4):

There would be no effect on water quality within the East Warm Springs Allotment under this alternative. It is possible that sediment would be contributed at a high rate as a result of livestock activity along Jack Creek. Riparian vegetation would continue to be compromised within areas that are accessible to wild horses and livestock.

Native, T&E, and Locally Important Species (Standard 5):

Wildlife:

Greater sage-grouse would continue to use the allotment throughout the year. The slow improvement in residual vegetation in the understory of plant communities would continue in the Native Pasture.

Habitat for pygmy rabbits would not increase or decline under the no action alternative. There would be no change to the current conditions.

Plants:

There were no known Special Status plants or their habitats found when botanical clearances were completed for the Week Lake Pasture fence, Weed Lake Well or the Lower Jack Creek exclosure fence. A botanical clearance will be completed for the Weed Lake pipeline in the spring of 2005. If any Special Status plant species are found they will be mitigated by avoidance or the project will be relocated.

Within the remainder of the East Warm Springs Allotment, the Special Status plants or plant communities that are known to exist are either in areas that livestock do not access (exclosures) or are not believed to be affected by livestock grazing activities.

2. Domestic Livestock Management

Domestic livestock management would be as it is now within the East Warm Springs Allotment. There would be a continual shortage of spring forage annually, especially on years that the Southwest Eagles Nest Seeding is scheduled for use. Without control of water at the lower elevations of the allotment near Weed Lake, livestock would continue to move down from the higher country during the late summer which results in very high utilization levels on forage in this area.

3. Wild Horses

There would be no change to wild horses or their habitat under the no action alternative.

4. Cultural Resources

With no fence construction, well or pipeline development proposed, no effects to cultural or historic sites would occur.

5. Recreation

There would be no effects to hunting or primitive camping within the East Warm Springs Allotment under the no action alternative.

6. Noxious Weeds

Any soil-disturbing activity has the potential to create an environment for the introduction or establishment of noxious weeds. Continued uncontrolled use of Lower Jack Creek by livestock and wild horses throughout the year would create an area vulnerable to noxious weed introductions.

7. Migratory Birds

To continue the current management of the seeding pastures would reduce the amount of use by migratory birds as habitat conditions continue to deteriorate. Migratory birds would find the riparian area along Lower Jack Creek in a less than desirable state and would not use the area for nesting, foraging or resting.

8. Socioeconomic Effects

The permittee would have a less stable livestock operation from which to generate income from public land under this alternative. The local economy would not be affected over the short term, but may experience some negative effects as income is lost due to poor conditions along Jack Creek.

9. Cumulative Effects

Under the no action alternative there would be no increase in the amount of fencing or other projects within the project and adjacent areas. No cumulative effects would occur.

CHAPTER V: PERSONS, GROUPS, AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES CONSULTED

Burns Paiute Tribe
Harvey Dunbar, Permittee
Laurence and Allene Dunn, Permittee
Ross and Kerry Opie, Permittee
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
William R. Taylor, Permittee
Tyler Brothers, Permittee
V.E. Ranches, Inc., Permittee

CHAPTER VI: LIST OF PREPARERS

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CHAPTER VII: MAPS

Map 1 - General Location Map
Map 2 - Proposed Action Alternative Map
Map 3 – No Action Alternative Map